

Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2008
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe,
log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org
and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org
and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to
subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the
following sites:

<http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm>
Now available:
<http://www.atarinews.org>

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
<http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/>

=~==~==

~ CompuServe Shut Down! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Google's New OS!
~ Bing To Pass Yahoo? ~ Internet Explorer Fades ~ PS3 Price Cut? No!
~ Oldest Bible Is Online ~ TinyURL Spam Is Growing ~ Antivirus Glitch!

-* Windows 7 On Sale, Buy Now? *-
-* Government Web Sites Are Attacked! *-
-* White House Among Targets of Cyber Attacks *-

=~==~==

->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, we've finally seen the sun again, and felt some warmer weather for a change. What a difference it makes to be able to go outside and enjoy some seasonal weather! It won't last long, but I'm happy for the moment!

On a sad note, this week it was reported to this editor that CompuServe, the first real successful online community, has been shut down after 30 years of service. CompuServe, lately owned by AOL, was THE place to be for many years. While I haven't used its services for a number of years, I remember being a member with fond memories.

For Atari users, the loss of CompuServe is just one more rusted nail, of many, in the coffin that belongs to what we all remember as Atari. Back in the day, Atari users had three primary online services which boasted a lot of activity: GENie, Delphi, and CompuServe. I was a member on all three services, and each had its merits. As Atari died - even before the final funeral - these online services started to wane, especially regarding Atari activity. GENie was the first to go, and now CompuServe. Ironically, the Atari Advantage forum on Delphi (now DelphiForums) is still around. How do I know that? I happen to be the forum manager, that's how I know! Granted, the Atari Advantage forum is a mere shadow of its former self; activity has all but ceased to exist other than a few messages now and again, and the weekly posting and announcement of A-ONE.

During those years of incredible online activity, all three services attracted a wide assortment of Atari users. We came to discuss Atari the company, software, shows, and everything in-between. There were good times, bad, and heated - just mention STReport, Ralph Mariano, or various staff members - and you'll know what I mean! But in those days, all facets of Atari life were discussed online. And whether you liked it or not, these discussions were interesting. And now they're all but gone. It's a shame, but comes to no surprise - even if these services weren't available just for Atari users.

So, if you're a long-time Atari user, and perhaps a former member of any of the "big three" online services, give a brief tip of the hat in memory of one more thing Atari users have lost over the years.

Until next time...

=~==~==

AOL Shuttters Classic Dial-up Provider

CompuServe, the first commercially successful online and email provider in America, has been shut down by AOL after 30 years of service.

The original CompuServe - later renamed CompuServe Classic - was laid to rest July 1, 2009. In a message sent to its remaining subscribers, AOL urged customers sticking with cheap dial-up to move on to the company's surviving sub-brand ISP, CompuServe 2000.

CompuServe's online service for consumers debuted in 1979 and soon become synonymous with the online experience for a generation of computer users. It was the first service to offer electronic mail capabilities and tech support to PC users. By 1991, the company boasted having over a half a million users simultaneously online. At its prime, CompuServe's moderated forums were also the de-facto place online for the tech crowd.

Competing upstart services like AOL, however, eventually surpassed CompuServe in popularity by offering perks such as monthly rates instead of per-hour online access.

When AOL went on to purchase CompuServe's online services and browser software in 1997, the company was preserved as a separate service. After the acquisition, however, CompuServe as a brand became woefully neglected. For example, the latest version of the access software for CompuServe Classic is dated January 11, 1999 - for Windows NT.

And now with AOL finds itself at the brink of total obscurity, the online provider has finally unplugged its fore bearer.

It's important to note that CompuServe users will be able to convert their ridiculous classic 9 and 10-digit email addresses to the CompuServe 2000 service in order to retain their well-earned sense of superiority over youngster internet users everywhere. Nothing says stay off my lawn like 76453.1032@compuserve.com

==~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and things just keep getting more and more interesting. I think I was probably the only writer in the entire world who didn't mention Michael Jackson last week. And of those who did mention MJ, some of them even remembered to mention that Farrah Fawcett

died the same day as he did, and of a horrible, painful, wasting disease. Then there was Billy Mays and several other 'celebrities', whose names escape me right now.

But I'm willing to be that no one... none of all the writers in the world, professional writers, I mean, stopped to mention the (probably) thousands of others who died the same week in relative anonymity. Those mourned by their families and friends but relatively unnoticed by the rest of us. I browsed obituaries.com just now, and was going to throw together a short list of people

none of us had ever heard of, and who died the same week as MJ and Farrah... but that's cheesy, isn't it? A... device. Not worthy of note and certainly not respectful of those I'd be listing.

Personally, I always thought MJ was a 'tragic case'. He was deprived of his childhood because of his talent... I'm not going to get into by whom or for how

long or in what way... because I don't know the facts. But it SEEMS clear that he was a guy who never got a chance to be a kid because he was a money-making-machine, and craved what he'd missed. Hell, I had a GREAT childhood and I STILL don't want to grow up!

Okay, enough about Mickey J. There's nothing I can say about him and nothing that I think about him that you haven't heard a couple of dozen times already. I just wish the media circus would die down and allow his family and close friends to cope with their loss in a way befitting to them... and to him.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips and info available every week from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Peter Slegg asks about the specifics of the 'Atari' Coldfire computer:

"Does anyone know if the acf will have enough speed to be able to run a Java VM to some degree? I know there isn't an Atari JVM yet."

G^¶tz Hoffart tells Peter:

"As 266 MIPS is much faster than the old Sparcstations where Java run initially: Yes.

It depends on what you mean by '»some degree'«."

'Calimero' adds this question:

"And will ACC (Atari Coldfire Computer) be fast enough to run FireFox?? If it will be then there is no real need to have any other computer in the house except my original Falcon and the ACC! [grin]"

G^¶tz replies:

"Dunno. Firefox is in my opinion bloat software. Just look at it using an older X11 Terminal -- you'll see frame by frame and border by border drawn ... unusable.

Perhaps Epiphany is faster. Or a browser integrating the WebKit engine."

Zoe Stephenson adds:

"When I've used a lightweight browser on slightly older machines, it's usually been Skipstone. Seemed to work out pretty well, but it does involve having GTK on the system."

Piotr Mietniowski asks for help with a Falcon Game:

"I have a problem with H2O (falcon game). When I launch this game I see Intro and It is OK, but next press space key, play and enter my name, the game is crashed, black screen and music is crashed. Does anybody know what is the problem. I try to run on the clean system with control key during the boot computer, but the problem is the same..."

Then Piotr posts:

"Yesterday I solved a problem with this game. It is very strange, because I can run this game but another disk driver with HDDriver it is not working, I can try it with ICD and everything it is OK."

'PPutnik' tells Piotr:

"From my experience after hard disk adapting a lot of games: Hddriver is not best for gaming. If Timer C (200Hz timer) is stopped or works different than in regular TOS - Hddriver will stick. It happens only after the game starts, when it changes timers, vectors, etc. So, if the game needs hard disk access (loading some files) after starting it may happen that the game will stick with hddriver. Examples: Defender 2, Dark Castle, Car Vup etc.

I made a small TSR program which fixes it by reactivating Timer C before hard disk access and restoring it's state after (for game). I will post it on my site with source.

However, I use my hard disk driver for gaming and everything... It is made to not be sensitive on Timer conditions + some other gaming support things. I will check H2O on my Falc..."

Joakim H^gberg posts this about his ataricq website:

"After a rather long period of no real news on my webpages, I decided something needed to be done about it. I have noted over time that updates have been slipping, often due to the fact that it involves more work to maintain a website consisting of handcrafted HTML-pages - especially when a site spans over wide areas such as icons archives, software support pages and so forth.

That is why I came to the conclusion that a Content Management System of some kind was needed to allow for easier maintenance. I did chose Joomla, since it seemed to be flexible and powerful enough and also is free to use. The downside with going the CMS route might be a loss of the original website feeling. However, when considering the option

being a less frequently updated website with decreasing value to visitors I think the chosen path will turn out for the better.

What about The Orphaned Projects Page? Well, when working with moving all the website content for my www.ataricq.org page, it occurred to me that moving the source codes to the very same website would make things even more convenient to handle - not to mention the advantage of suddenly having all of the TOPP sources available in categories, and fully searchable through the website search engine!

Anyway, please have a look at the revamped website, and do let me know how you like it, or if there is something you find is missing.

Check things out here: <http://www.ataricq.org/> "

Our buddy Lonny Purcell checks it out and replies simply:

"Search option rocks!"

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

```
->In This Week's Gaming Section - PlayStation 3 Price Cuts? No!
      " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "
```

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
 "

Sony Dismisses PlayStation 3 Price Cuts

Sony Corp Chief Executive Howard Stringer brushed off concerns that the PlayStation 3 video game console is too expensive, and said the company is unlikely to sell parts of its business amid the recession.

Stringer, arriving at the Allen & Co conference in Sun Valley, Idaho, on Tuesday, described recent comments about PlayStation's price by Robert Kotick, the CEO of video game publisher Activision Blizzard Inc, as

standard business tactics.

"He likes to make a lot of noise," Stringer said, when asked about the comments. "He's putting pressure on me and I'm putting pressure on him. That's the nature of business."

Last month, Kotick told the Times of London that Activision might cease developing games for the PlayStation if Sony did not cut the price of the console, which competes with Microsoft <#> Corp's Xbox and Nintendo Co Ltd's Wii.

"When we look at 2010 and 2011, we might want to consider if we support the console," Kotick had said.

Asked about the logic of not cutting prices, Stringer said, "I (would) lose money on every PlayStation I make?how's that for logic."

Stringer and Kotick are among the couple of hundred tech and media executives convening in Sun Valley this week for the annual confab.

Asked about consolidation in the entertainment industry, Stringer said Sony was not looking to get rid of any assets.

"We're learning to fuse content and hardware <#>. This wouldn't be a time to get rid of either," he said.

Stringer said he will be participating in a panel about the recession at the conference.

"I see green shoots but it's a very light shade of green," he said.

While the executive said that the economic situation <#> in most of Asia is looking good and that he sees a bottom in China, it was still too soon to call a bottom to the recession overall.

"It's very hard to tell whether this is just a minor trough on the way to recovery or a trough on the way to a trough," said Stringer.

=~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Government Web Sites Attacked; N. Korea Suspected

A widespread computer attack that began July 4 knocked out the Web sites of the Treasury Department, the Secret Service and other U.S. government agencies, according to officials inside and outside the government.

Sites in South Korea were also affected, and South Korean intelligence officials believe the attack was carried out by North Korean or pro-Pyongyang forces.

The U.S. government Web sites, which also included those of the Federal Trade Commission and the Transportation Department, were all down at varying points over the holiday weekend and into this week. South Korean Internet sites began experiencing problems Tuesday.

U.S. officials refused to publicly discuss details of the cyber attack.

But South Korea's National Intelligence Service, the nation's main spy agency, told a group of South Korean lawmakers Wednesday it believes that North Korea or North Korean sympathizers in the South "were behind" the attacks, according to an aide to one of the lawmakers briefed on the information.

The aide spoke on condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the information. The National Intelligence Service - South Korea's main spy agency - said it couldn't immediately confirm the report, but it said it was cooperating with American authorities.

Amy Kudwa, spokeswoman for the Homeland Security Department, said the agency's U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team issued a notice to federal departments and other partner organizations about the problems and "advised them of steps to take to help mitigate against such attacks."

Others familiar with the U.S. outage, which is called a denial of service attack, said the fact that the government Web sites were still being affected three days after it began signaled an unusually lengthy and sophisticated attack.

Two government officials acknowledged that the Treasury and Secret Service sites were brought down, and said the agencies were working with their Internet service provider to resolve the problem. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the matter.

Ben Rushlo, director of Internet technologies at Keynote Systems, said problems with the Transportation Department site began Saturday and continued until Monday, while the FTC site was down Sunday and Monday.

Keynote Systems is a mobile and Web site monitoring company based in San Mateo, Calif. The company publishes data detailing outages on Web sites, including 40 government sites it watches.

According to Rushlo, the Transportation Web site was "100 percent down" for two days, so that no Internet users could get through to it. The FTC site, meanwhile, started to come back online late Sunday, but even on Tuesday Internet users still were unable to get to the site 70 percent of the time.

Web sites of major South Korean government agencies, including the presidential Blue House and the Defense Ministry, and some banking sites were paralyzed Tuesday. An initial investigation found that many personal computers were infected with a virus ordering them to visit major official Web sites in South Korea and the U.S. at the same time, Korea Information Security Agency official Shin Hwa-su said.

The powerful Internet attack that overwhelmed computers at U.S. and South Korean government agencies for days was even broader than initially realized, pestering the White House, the Pentagon and the New York Stock Exchange and shutting down other official Web sites.

Targets of the most widespread cyber offensive of recent years also included the National Security Agency, Homeland Security Department and State Department, the Nasdaq stock market and The Washington Post, according to an early analysis of the malicious software used in the attacks.

The cyber assault on the White House site had "absolutely no effect on the White House's day-to-day operations," said spokesman Nick Shapiro.

Preventative measures kept whitehouse.gov "stable and available to the general public," Shapiro said, but Internet visitors from Asia may have experienced problems.

South Korean intelligence officials believe the attacks were carried out by North Korea or pro-Pyongyang forces, but many experts in cyberwarfare said it was simply too early to know where the offensive originated.

Many of the U.S. government targets appear to have successfully blunted the sustained computer assaults. But others, such as the Treasury Department, were knocked off-line at times.

Two government officials acknowledged that Treasury's site was brought down, and said the agency had been working with its Internet service provider to resolve the problem. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the matter.

As of last night, Shapiro said, "all federal Web sites were back up and running."

Ed Donovan, a spokesman for the U.S. Secret Service, said that the cyber attacks slowed access to the agency's Web site, which operates on the same computer server as Treasury's. But Secret Service's site remained in operation despite the crippling effects of the cyber offensive, Donovan said.

"Our site was never knocked down, but it was slowed down at points," Donovan said. He added that Secret Service's "operational side" was not affected by the attacks.

State Department spokesman Ian C. Kelly told reporters that the department's state.gov Web site has been under attack since July 5.

"It's still ongoing but I'm told it's much reduced now," Kelly said.

The Associated Press obtained the target list from security experts analyzing the attacks. It was not immediately clear who might be responsible or what their motives were.

The cyber attack did not appear, at least at the outset, to target internal or classified files or systems, but instead aimed at agencies' public sites, creating a nuisance both for officials and the Web consumers who use them.

Ben Rushlo, director of Internet technologies at Keynote Systems, said

problems with the Transportation Department site began Saturday and continued until Monday, while the FTC site was down Sunday and Monday.

Keynote Systems is a mobile and Web site monitoring company based in San Mateo, Calif. The company publishes data detailing outages on Web sites, including 40 government sites it watches.

According to Rushlo, the Transportation Web site was "100 percent down" for two days, so that no Internet users could get through. The FTC site, meanwhile, started to come back online late Sunday, but even on Tuesday Internet users still were unable to get to the site 70 percent of the time.

Dale Meyerrose, former chief information officer for the U.S. intelligence community, said that at least one of the federal agency Web sites got saturated with as many as a million hits per second per attack - amounting to 4 billion Internet hits at once. He would not identify the agency, but said the Web site is generally capable of handling a level of about 25,000 users.

Meyerrose, who is now vice president at Harris Corp., said the characteristics of the attack suggest the involvement of between 30,000 to 60,000 computers.

He said it appears there was one attack on July 4, which some agencies were able to contain, and then a second round on Tuesday. Meyerrose said that since the attackers would have used surrogate computers, it is still too early to tell where it originated.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service, the nation's principal spy agency, told a group of South Korean lawmakers Wednesday it believes that North Korea or North Korean sympathizers in the South were behind the attacks, according to an aide to one of the lawmakers briefed on the information.

The aide spoke on condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the information. The National Intelligence Service - South Korea's main spy agency - said it couldn't immediately confirm the report.

Amy Kudwa, spokeswoman for the Homeland Security Department, said the agency's U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team issued a notice to federal departments and other partner organizations about the problems and "advised them of steps to take to help mitigate against such attacks."

New York Stock Exchange spokesman Ray Pelledchia could not confirm the attack on the trading institution, saying the company does not comment on security issues.

Attacks on federal computer networks are common, ranging from nuisance hacking to more serious assaults, sometimes blamed on China. U.S. security officials also worry about cyber attacks from al-Qaida or other terrorists.

The widespread attack was "loud and clumsy," which suggests it was carried out by an unsophisticated organization, said Amit Yoran, chief executive at NetWitness Corp. and the former U.S. government cybersecurity chief. "This is not the elegance we would expect from sophisticated adversaries."

Web sites of major South Korean government agencies, including the

presidential Blue House and the Defense Ministry, and some banking sites were paralyzed Tuesday. An initial investigation found that many personal computers were infected with a virus ordering them to visit major official Web sites in South Korea and the U.S. at the same time, Korea Information Security Agency official Shin Hwa-su said.

Google's New Operating System To Take on Microsoft

Google Inc. is working on a new operating system for inexpensive computers in a daring attempt to wrest away Microsoft Corp.'s long-running control over people's computing experience.

The new operating system, announced late Tuesday night on Google's Web site, will be based on the company's nine-month-old Web browser, Chrome. Google intends to rely on help from the community of open-source programmers to develop the Chrome operating system, which is expected to begin running computers in the second half of 2010.

The Mountain View, Calif.-based company disclosed its plans for the operating system shortly after an online technology news service, Ars Technica, and The New York Times telegraphed the news on their Web sites.

Google is designing the operating system primarily for "netbooks," a lower-cost, less powerful breed of laptop computers that is becoming increasingly popular among budget-conscious consumers primarily interested in surfing the Web.

The operating system represents Google's boldest challenge yet to its biggest nemesis - Microsoft.

A high-stakes duel between the two technology powerhouses has been steadily escalating in recent years as Google's dominance of the Internet's lucrative search market has given it the means to threaten Microsoft in ways that few other companies can.

Google already has rankled Microsoft by luring away some of its top employees and developing an online suite of computer programs that provide an alternative to Microsoft's top-selling word processing, spreadsheet and calendar applications.

Meanwhile, Microsoft has been trying to thwart Google by investing billions of dollars to improve its own Internet search and advertising systems - to little avail so far. In the past month or so, though, Microsoft has been winning positive reviews and picking up more users with the latest upgrade to its search engine, now called "Bing." Microsoft is hailing the makeover with a \$100 million marketing campaign.

Now Google is aiming for Microsoft's financial jugular with Chrome its operating system.

Microsoft has drawn much of its power - and profits - from the Windows operating system that has steered most personal computers for the past two decades.

Google's chief executive, Eric Schmidt, and its co-founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, have made little attempt to conceal their disdain for Windows in recent years.

Schmidt maintains Microsoft sometimes unfairly rigs its operating system to limit consumer choices - something that Microsoft has consistently denied doing. Google fears Microsoft could limit access to its search engine and other products if Windows is set up to favor Microsoft products in the default settings.

Page and Brin have frequently derided Windows as a clunky operating system susceptible to computer viruses and other security problems.

Google made a veiled reference to Windows' perceived shortcomings in its blog posting.

"We hear a lot from our users and their message is clear - computers need to get better," wrote Sundar Pichai, Google's vice president of product management and Linus Upson, Google's engineering director.

A Microsoft spokesman didn't immediately respond to an e-mail request for comment sent early Wednesday morning.

Schmidt and Brin are expected to discuss Google's new operating system later this week when they appear at a media conference hosted by Allen & Co. at the Sun Valley resort in Idaho.

Despite its own power and prominence, Google won't have an easy time changing the status quo that has governed the personal computing industry for so long.

As an example of how difficult it is to topple a long-established market leader, Google estimates about 30 million people are now using its Chrome browser - a fraction of those that rely on Microsoft's market-leading Internet Explorer. And there have been various attempts to develop open-source software to undermine Microsoft with relatively little effect.

The Chrome operating system will run in a new windowing system on top of a Linux kernel - computer coding that has been the foundation for the open-source software movement for nearly two decades.

Google has already introduced an operating system for mobile devices, called Android, that vies against various other systems, including ones made by Microsoft and Apple Inc.

The Android system worked well enough to entice some computer makers to begin developing netbooks that will eventually run on it.

Google, though, apparently believes a Chrome-based system will be better suited for running applications in netbooks.

"We believe choice will drive innovation for the benefit of everyone, including Google," wrote Pichai and Upson.

Bing Appears Ready To Grab Yahoo's Search Ranking

Microsoft's Bing search engine overtook Yahoo in the United States on Thursday, according to StatCounter. The last time Bing overtook Yahoo on a single day was on June 4, shortly after its launch, the Dublin-based

Web analytics firm said.

Bing grabbed 12.9 percent of the U.S. market versus Yahoo's 10.15 percent share, but both are still well behind market leader Google at 74.99 percent, reported StatCounter, which bases its research on an analysis of 1.316 billion search-engine referring clicks -- including 336 million from the U.S.

"While (Bing's) lead over Yahoo may not last into next week, our data suggests that it is slowly but surely closing the gap," said StatCounter CEO Aodhan Cullen.

StatCounter reported earlier this month that Bing helped Microsoft increase its share of the U.S. search market by one percentage point during June. Overall, Microsoft held an 8.23 percent share last month, trailing far behind Google (78.48 percent) and Yahoo (11.04 percent).

Cullen said the latest data indicate Bing's success is coming at Google's expense. "We can see that Bing is gaining very slowly, but it is gaining, and the data is almost a mirror image in that when Bing goes up, Google goes down and vice versa," Cullen said. "But Yahoo remains very steady - it's not losing any share."

Other recent reports suggest that Google users in particular seem to be looking for a viable alternative to the current search-engine market leader.

"In the first week following the announcement of brand Bing - but still before the official June 1 launch - 97 percent of visitors to Bing.com overlapped with Google, compared with only 37 percent and two percent overlap with Yahoo and AOL, respectively," said Taylor Holsinger at Web analytics firm Compete.com. "During launch week, the dramatically larger overlap of Bing Googlers continued, relative to the Bing overlap with Yahoo and AOL."

However, Cullen cautioned that Bing's rise in popularity also may be getting a temporary boost from recent press reports touting the search engine's advantages over Google. "The jump in Bing's share may reflect a positive review of the search engine compared to Google which appeared online in The New York Times on the 8th and in the print version on the 9th July," Cullen said.

Among other things, the Times article pointed out that the first few paragraphs of a story can be accessed at Bing by hovering the mouse arrow over a link. By contrast, Google users have to click on the link and access the story directly to learn more.

As for what happens to Microsoft's new search engine in the days ahead, "we just have to wait and see if Bing will fall back down again, and it probably will," Cullen said. "But overall Bing is gaining traction."

Meanwhile, Microsoft is expected to continue tweaking Bing in ways that further differentiate the new search engine from Google. For example, earlier this month the software giant added Tweets from prominent Twitter members to the content displayed by its search engine.

In its initial foray into integrating more real-time data into Bing's search results, Microsoft is "starting with some of the more prominent and prolific Twitterers from a variety of spheres," said Sean Suchter, general manager of Microsoft's Silicon Valley search technology center.

"We picked a few thousand people to start, based primarily on their follower count and volume of tweets."

Windows 7 Is On Sale. Should You Buy It Now?

Microsoft Corp.'s next installment of Windows doesn't launch until October, but deep discounts on some versions are available through Saturday if you want to pre-order. Before pouncing on this deal, make sure it's right for your PC.

There are plenty of reasons why you'd want Windows 7. It appears to be more stable - less prone to crashes - than previous versions of Windows. It's less annoying than Vista, which could deluge users with security warnings and other nagging reminders. Windows 7 has a cleaner, simpler interface.

One thing that isn't simple about Windows 7 is the flavors it comes in. Microsoft said it tried to keep the options easy, but that didn't happen. You still must choose from Home Premium, Professional or Ultimate versions. (There also are Starter and Enterprise, but neither are sold directly to consumers.)

The consumer versions come in two variations, an upgrade and a full version. If you already have a Windows computer, buy the upgrade. If you're building a computer from scratch in the basement and don't have an unused copy of XP or Vista that you've already bought, you'll need the full version.

Retailers such as Amazon.com Inc. and Best Buy Co. are taking pre-orders for the Home Premium upgrade and the Professional upgrade, for \$50 and \$100, respectively. In the fall, those will cost \$120 and \$200.

Here is advice on how to consider a Windows 7 upgrade, depending on various scenarios:

- * If you have Windows Vista Home Premium or Business, and you want the equivalent Windows 7 edition, pre-ordering the upgrade makes sense. You can trade up from Home Premium, or down from Business, with no extra hassle during installation. When your disk or download arrives Oct. 22, your PC will get a makeover, but your files, programs and settings should remain intact. (Don't tempt fate. Back up everything anyway.)

- * If you have Windows Vista Ultimate, you can pre-order the comparable version of Windows 7 for \$220. There is no tantalizing upgrade deal and Microsoft won't say whether it's planning one.

- * If you have Vista Ultimate but you want a lesser version of Windows 7, you can do that, too, even though this "upgrade" will be a bit of a downgrade. Depending on whether you switch to Home Premium or Professional for Windows 7, you'd have to give up features like BitLocker, which protects data if the PC is stolen, or Windows XP Mode, which lets you run older programs that aren't compatible with Windows 7.

If you miss those high-end features you can upgrade back to Ultimate later. Microsoft hasn't said how much its "anytime upgrades" will cost, but for Vista, these prices ranged from \$140 to \$200.

* If you have Windows XP, upgrading to Windows 7 is possible if your PC is powerful enough. But it's a bit of extra work, requiring more care with the files on your machine.

First download and run Microsoft's Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor to make sure your hardware meets minimum requirements. Among them: You need to have 1 gigabyte of RAM (or 2 gigs if your computer is a 64-bit machine, a reference to how much data it processes at once). You'll also need at least 16 gigabytes of hard disk space available (or 20 gigs on a 64-bit machine).

The Upgrade Advisor gave my XP machine a green light for Windows 7, though it listed several programs I'd have to uninstall first, then reinstall after.

You can install any version of Windows 7 if your PC passes muster. Microsoft has a step-by-step guide online. It recommends you use a utility program on the Windows 7 disk, "Easy Transfer," to copy your files and settings onto an external drive. Then it walks you through a "custom" installation and helps you get your old files onto the updated PC.

Other Browsers Advance as Internet Explorer Slides

Microsoft's share of the global and North American browser markets continued to fall in June, according to StatCounter. The latest data from the Dublin-based Web metrics firm shows the software giant's Internet Explorer browser lost 9.27 percentage points of global market share during the past 11 months.

StatCounter also notes that Mozilla's new Firefox 3.5 release rapidly gained more than two percent of the U.S. browser market since its launch last week.

"The fastest version yet of Firefox has certainly sprinted out of the blocks with 2.06 percent usage in the U.S. in a short time," commented StatCounter CEO Aodhan Cullen. "This latest addition boosts competition for Microsoft Internet Explorer in the browser market wars."

Rival Web metrics firm Net Applications also has noticed unusual changes on the browser front, though what it all means isn't yet clear. The company said it is currently conducting a review of its June data before releasing it to the public.

"We are investigating some significant variations in browser and operating-system statistics," Net Applications said. "The reports will not be available until we complete our review."

According to StatCounter, which collects user statistics from more than three million Web sites, Microsoft continues to lead the global browser market with a combined 59.5 percent share for IE6, IE7 and IE8. However, IE usage in North America has steadily fallen from 67.38 percent in July 2008 to 56.96 percent last month.

Mozilla remains firmly in second place in the worldwide browser market with a combined 30.4 percent share for its Firefox releases. Microsoft's leading browser rival also has picked up nearly 4.5 percentage points of

global market share since July last year, according to StatCounter.

What's more, Firefox has moved within striking distance of toppling Microsoft from the top browser spot in Europe. Mozilla's browser grabbed a 39 percent share of the regional market last month, second only to Microsoft's 46 percent. The latest statistics give a modicum of support to one of the software giant's central claims in its ongoing dispute with the European Commission - that healthy browser competition is already afoot within the European marketplace.

Firefox isn't the only Web browser picking up market share in Europe. Opera Software's browser release is also becoming increasingly popular within the region, according to StatCounter's latest data.

Opera's market share in Europe reached 8.47 percent last month - up from 3.55 percent in July 2008. However, Opera's global market share has only barely nudged upward during the same period (3.27 percent vs. 3.1 percent).

The global market share held by Apple's Safari browser amounted to 2.94 percent last month - down from 3.1 percent in July 2008. The good news for Apple is that its new Safari 4 release was downloaded more than 11 million times in the first three days following its introduction last month.

The flurry of interest in Apple's new browser included more than six million downloads of Safari for Windows-based PCs. The key for Apple will be to convert PC users trying out its new browser into committed Safari users.

Google's Chrome browser, which was launched last September, is currently in fourth place with a 2.83 percent global market share, according to StatCounter. But Google can take heart in noting that Chrome's share of the global market has nearly doubled since the end of February.

TinyURL Spam Growing, But It Can Be Beat

Spammers are always looking for new ways to infiltrate your e-mail inbox, and it appears that many are now seizing on tiny URLs, or shorter versions of long Web site addresses, according to a report from MessageLabs.

How do you know if the URL in your e-mail is from a legitimate source or a spammer hoping to dupe you into buying a product or revealing your personal information? Proceed with caution, according to Matt Sergeant, a senior anti-spam technologist at MessageLabs.

Tiny URLs were originally developed as a utility for Twitter, which enforces a 140-character limit. The shortened URLs allow for fewer characters to be used for the URLs themselves, with more allocated for the user's message. Without clicking on the tiny URLs, however, it's almost impossible to tell where the link will connect to: a legitimate URL, a spam site, or worse.

*Almost impossible, but not quite: here are two URL "lengthening" services that can tell you where the shortened URLs actually go, without taking you there.

(http://blogs.pcmag.com/securitywatch/2009/07/stay_safe_by_lengthening_your.php)

* An e-mail message with a bogus tiny URL will likely be quite short, with a variety of words and phrases in the e-mails, Sergeant said.

"Some of them, because of the bad grammar used, may hint at pharmaceuticals but it's not as blatant as spam from earlier days," he said.

MessageLabs has been monitoring tiny URL spam for the past few months, but the organization saw an unexpected spike in the middle of last week - jumping from zero to 2 percent of total spam in a matter of days. The trend is so new that MessageLabs did not have a chance to include it in its monthly intelligence report.

The Donbot botnet, which is responsible for about five billion spam messages per day, is one of the mail culprits when it comes to tiny URL spam, MessageLabs found.

"Spammers are always looking for some way to put their own URLs in e-mails - the basic idea is that they want to get around systems that block specific URLs," Sergeant said.

MessageLabs has yet to do any research specifically related to Twitter, but "these URL shortening services are getting more common due to sites like these and spammers are exploiting the level of trust people are putting into this type of tools," Sergeant said.

What happens if you click on a spam tiny URL? Will your computer be automatically infected? There is a chance that some links contain "drive-by attacks with malicious content and executables," Sergeant said, but most spammers are focusing on typical weight-loss or male enhancement-centric product pitches.

"We've seen the spammers use redirection links before, so this is one more step in that game to get you to their sites where they sell these products," he said.

There are legitimate uses for tiny URLs, so users should not abandon the service altogether, but Sergeant urged people to "be very careful about the trust model."

"Look at the content of the e-mail for clues, and if you can, verify that this person actually did mean to send you something," Sergeant said. "Services like Twitter have made the use of these URL shortening services the norm, which makes people trust links like these. Spammers are exploiting the level of trust people are putting into the continued use of short URLs."

Glitch in Antivirus Software Troubles PC Users

Antivirus software cuts two ways. It's great at blocking known viruses, but it can sometimes misfire, mistakenly flagging clean files as malicious. That sends a computer into a tailspin trying to clean up stuff that's supposed to be on there.

The problem can crash a computer, and fixing it can be a bear.

An example emerged this week when users of antivirus software made by Islandia, N.Y.-based CA Inc. watched as their machines warned of an infection and started quarantining files that turned out to be legitimate.

Lee Jay Mandell, a 60-year-old retired computer consultant and patent attorney from the Los Angeles area, said the problem popped up on his computer Wednesday night. He knew something was wrong because he recognized the types of files that were being quarantined were parts of Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system.

He drew on his technical experience to restore the machine, but says less adept users might stumble.

"I'm back, but it took me about six hours to get back," he said Friday.

Every antivirus company deals with false positives, and it's an embarrassment for companies whose job is to protect people's machines from sabotage. It happens because legitimate files sometimes have programming code or behaviors that are identical to those of viruses. The antivirus software spots files it believes are malicious and starts plucking them out.

The results can range from annoyance to outright meltdown of the machine if critical files are targeted. Last week some people using McAfee Inc.'s antivirus software said their computers crashed because of a false positive.

McAfee said the false positive only happened on older versions of its software that are no longer supported by the company. Newer versions won't have the problem.

CA apologized for the problem Mandell and others encountered and said its last major false positive was three years ago.

"Minor false positives happen periodically, but CA has historically maintained an industry low rate of false positives," the company said in a statement.

Cleaning up a false positive detection isn't always easy. The program might do it for you. But sometimes a user might need to go into the list of quarantined files and manually rename them, or call the company to request software to do the task automatically.

CA emphasized that the files that its software wrongly spotted as viruses this week were quarantined or renamed, not deleted, and "are recoverable."

The lesson: Pay close attention to your computer if it's telling you it's found a virus and is cleaning it up. You might need to call your antivirus vendor's customer support to help you make sure your machine is totally clean - or to help you recover files if the cleanup was a false alarm.

About 800 pages of the world's oldest surviving Bible have been pieced together and published on the Internet for the first time, experts in Britain said Monday.

The Codex Sinaiticus, written in Greek on parchment leaves in the fourth century, is available online in a project involving institutions in Britain, Germany, Egypt and Russia which held different parts of the ancient book.

As part of the four-year joint project, digital photographs have been taken of the reunited manuscript, allowing scholars worldwide to research in-depth the Greek text, the British Library in London said.

The library, which holds a large chunk of the Bible, also opened an exhibit Monday that includes artefacts linked to the manuscript to coincide with its online launch.

"The Codex Sinaiticus is one of the world's greatest written treasures," said Scot McKendrick, head of Western manuscripts at the British Library.

"This 1600-year-old manuscript offers a window into the development of early Christianity and first-hand evidence of how the text of the Bible was transmitted from generation to generation," he said.

Originally 1,460 pages long and measuring 16 inches (40 centimetres) by 14 inches, the manuscript was handwritten by a number of scribes around the time of Constantine the Great who died in 337, experts said.

The manuscript, which was revised and corrected over the centuries, lay undisturbed in a monastery in Sinai in Egypt until it was found by a German professor in the mid-1800s and handed to Russia's Tsar Alexander II.

Britain later bought most of the book from the Soviet Union in the 1930s, while Egypt kept still more pages found in the monastery in 1975.

Professor David Parker, whose team made the electronic transcription of the manuscript, said the Internet project proved challenging with some of the pages in poor condition.

"The process of deciphering and transcribing the fragile pages of an ancient text containing over 650,000 words is a huge challenge, which has taken nearly four years," said Parker from the University of Birmingham.

"The digital images of the virtual manuscript show the beauty of the original and readers are even able to see the difference in handwriting between the different scribes who copied the text," he said.

The manuscript is available at <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org>.

=~::~~::~=

at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.